



July 29, 2026

H.E. Sidharto Reza Suryodipuro
Ambassador
Human Rights Council President
Permanent Representative of Indonesia
to the United Nations
[REDACTED]

Re: Iran's Confiscation of Church Property and Persecution of Christians

The European Centre for Law and Justice (ECLJ) is a non-profit organization dedicated to the defense of human rights around the world. As a Special Consultative Status holder with the ECOSOC, the ECLJ submits this letter to draw the Human Rights Council's attention toward Iran's systematic abuses of religious freedom and to request the Council to take concrete steps to address such abuses.

For years, the Islamic Republic of Iran has persecuted Christians, especially those who leave Islam and convert to Christianity, by detaining, interrogating, torturing, imprisoning, and even killing them. In 2025, for example, 254 Christians were arrested because of their religious beliefs.¹ In 2026, following the anti-Iranian regime protests, Iranian security forces reportedly killed at least 19 Iranian Christians.²

Moreover, in allowing historically recognized churches to operate under the security agencies' watchful eye, Iran keeps record of church members and surveils new members to determine if they are converts. In addition to closely monitoring churches for converts, Iran has consistently closed and confiscated churches. Most recently, the Iranian regime shut down 150-year-old St. Peter Evangelical Church and outlawed Christian satellite television networks, labeling them hostile.

In June 2026, Iran issued a decree that declared St. Peter Evangelical Church, several residences, and two schools, as government property. Families living at the church-owned residences fled after threats from Iranian security forces.³ About twenty families were forced to leave their homes.

¹ *Iran Accused of Targeting Christians as 254 Arrested in One Year*, CHRISTIANITY DAILY (Feb. 26, 2026), <https://www.christianitydaily.com/news/iran-accused-of-targeting-christians-as-254-arrested-in-one-year.html>.

² Benjamin Weinthal, *Iran Regime Accused of Killing 19 Christians in Anti-regime Protests as Persecution Continues: Watchdog*, FOXNEWS (Feb. 13, 2026), <https://www.foxnews.com/world/iran-regime-accused-killing-19-christians-anti-regime-protests-persecution-continues-watchdog>.

³ Jill Nelson, *Iran Shuttters Country's Oldest Protestant Church*, CHRISTIANITY TODAY (July 21, 2026), <https://www.christianitytoday.com/2026/07/iran-shuttters-landmark-church/>.

The confiscation has been apparently done pursuant to a 1998 order by the Revolutionary Court that ordered the compound's transfer to the Execution of Imam Khomeini's Order, a body operating under the Office of the Supreme Leader.⁴ Sadly, "[a]s one of the last functioning Protestant sites in the capital, the fate of [this] church has become a symbol of the shrinking space for minority religious practice in the Islamic Republic."⁵

As noted above, St. Peter Evangelical Church's confiscation is not an isolated incident. For decades, Iran has cracked down on Christians, especially Christian converts, spying on them, arresting, investigating, torturing, and imprisoning them for their Christian faith. The regime has also shut down numerous churches.⁶

In yet a further attempt to destroy freedom of religion, Iran's Ministry of Intelligence just recently classified Christian satellite broadcasters as hostile organizations. Any form of "cooperation" with Christian television networks is also prohibited.⁷ As such, watching, contacting, or sharing content from any such organization could lead to prosecution under national security and espionage laws.⁸ Indeed, it has been reported that "[a]t least five Christians have already been prosecuted under the new espionage laws..."⁹

All of the above-mentioned actions are grave violations of international human rights law. Though Iran is a party to the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (ICCPR), it does not honor its ICCPR obligations in any way. Official ratification status must, however, require accountability to ensure fundamental human rights laws are respected. This is especially so with respect to the right to freedom of religion, the fundamental character of which is reflected in the fact that it "cannot be derogated from, even in times of public emergency."¹⁰

While restrictions on the freedom to *manifest* religion or belief may be prescribed by law when they "are necessary to protect public safety, order, health or morals, or the fundamental rights of others,"¹¹ restricting peaceful worship or shutting down a place of worship have no nexus to these exceptions.

⁴ Press Release, OHCHR, Iran: UN Experts Urge Reversal of Tehran Church Compound Seizure and Return of its Christian Residents (July 15, 2026), <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2026/07/iran-un-experts-urge-reversal-tehran-church-compound-seizure-and-return-its>.

⁵ *IRGC Moves to Seize Historic Protestant Church in Tehran*, IRAN INTERNATIONAL (July 1, 2026), <https://www.iranintl.com/en/202606304322>.

⁶ *Iranian Christians Under Attack: Government Church Seizure Brings Attention to Homelessness Among Religious Minorities*, IRANWIRE (July 17, 2026), <https://iranwire.com/en/features/155098-iranian-christians-under-attack-government-church-seizure-brings-attention-to-homelessness-among-religious-minorities/>.

⁷ Bahar, *When Watching Christian TV Becomes a Crime*, OPEN DOORS (July 22, 2026), <https://www.opendoorsuk.org/news/latest-news/iran-christian-tv/>.

⁸ *Id.*

⁹ Rachel Huston, *Iran Outlaws Christian Satellite TV Labelling it 'Hostile'*, PREMIER CHRISTIAN NEWS (July 23, 2026), <https://premierchristian.news/us/news/article/latest-crackdown-on-christians-in-iran-hits-satellite-tv-promoting-the-gospel>.

¹⁰ U.N. Human Rights Comm., General Comment No. 22 (art, 18), U.N. Doc. CCPR/C/21/Rev.1/Add.4, at 1 (Sept. 27, 1993).

¹¹ *Id.* at 3.

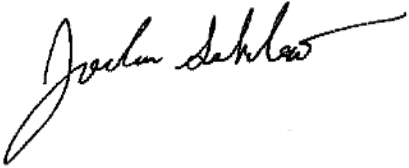
The Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Islamic Republic of Iran and the Special Rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief have already issued a statement outlining Iran's violations of international human rights law and condemning Iran's actions. The statement points out that "once there were around 50 Protestant churches in Iran...[and t]oday, there are effectively none..."¹²

We request the Human Rights Council to join the Special Rapporteurs and condemn Iran's human rights violations. We further request that this Council also take concrete steps to address the systematic abuses of religious freedom committed by Iran.

In this regard, we request that the Council specifically include the shutting down of churches, confiscation of church properties, and detention, interrogations, and imprisonment of Christians in its resolutions and its mandate to the Independent Fact-Finding Mission on the Islamic Republic of Iran.¹³

Finally, we request that the Human Rights Council ask the Iranian government to return St. Peter Evangelical Church to its rightful owner, the Council of the Evangelical Churches of Iran.

Respectfully submitted,



Jordan Sekulow
Chief Counsel



Shaheryar Gill
Senior Counsel



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Senior Counsel

¹² Press Release, *supra* note 4.

¹³ Human Rights Council Res. 58/21, U.N. Doc. A/HRC/RES/58/21 (Apr. 4, 2025).